

XYZ (MAI VAN BO CONTACTS)
 MAY 1965 - FEBRUARY 1966

SUMMARY and ANALYSIS

1. Ambiguous Beginning

The U.S. contacts with Mai Van Bo, Head of the DRVN Delegation in Paris, developed in three stages: first, through the French Government; then, through a free-lancing private U.S. citizen; and finally by means of an authorized but "unofficial" U.S. representative.

The timing of Bo's initial approach to the French and the precise content of his message represent two important and ambiguous points. With respect to the timing, the French claimed that Bo made a "fairly pressing approach" to them on the morning of May 18th, just prior to the resumption of U.S. bombings. In fact, this meeting must have occurred after the resumption. The earliest that Bo saw the French was probably 9:00 a.m., Paris time. The bombings had resumed at 8:00 a.m., Saigon time -- in other words, eight hours earlier. There was, then, sufficient time for Hanoi to cable Bo and tell him not to make the approach. Moreover, it seems clear that the message was probably drafted before the bombings resumed, with the signal to execute delivery being given after the resumption.

This technique of delaying response to a bombing pause until a few hours after the pause ended was repeated in Rangoon on January 31, after the 37-day suspension. The DRV probably used this gap for two purposes: propaganda and bargaining. The propaganda value was potentially high -- couldn't the U.S. wait a few more hours before plunging back to the attack? More importantly, it was a way of cancelling out the U.S. negotiating blue chip. The DRV would not respond with the threat of resumption hanging over its head, since this could be read as a sign of weakness. If it were to enter negotiations, the DRV seemed bent on doing so only after the threat of bombing resumption had been minimized (public declaration on cessation?) and only after the U.S. conveyed a "recognition" of the Four Points.

It was this latter element, the meaning of the Four Points, that represented the second ambiguity. Since the April 8, 1965 enunciation of the Four Points; the U.S. had been interpreting our acceptance as a precondition for negotiations. While Phan Van Dong explained their meaning as the "basis for the soundest political settlement" (underlining added), the U.S. tended to focus on what followed: "if this basis is recognized, favorable conditions will be created for the peaceful settlement of the Vietnam problem, and it will be possible to consider the

reconvening of an international conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva Conference on Vietnam." Hanoi had done nothing to clarify this issue. Indeed, when Seaborn, on June 6, 1965, asked Trinh whether the points were preconditions or ultimate goals, Trinh deliberately remained vague.

The two slightly contradictory messages conveyed to us by the French on May 19 (by Asian Director Manac'h) and on May 20 (by Director of Political Affairs Lucet) did not lift the veil, but they were suggestive. The first message, given in "strict confidence," indicated that Bo stated that the Four Points "were to be considered not rpt not prior conditions but rather as working principles for a negotiation which should, in the DRVN view, represent ultimate goal of settlement in Vietnam." The second message, conveyed officially, stated: "Recognition these 'principles' would create favorable conditions for solution problem and would 'open' possibility of convocation conference like Geneva, 1954." This message also included a bonus from Bo--U.S. troop withdrawal would depend on the "conclusions of a negotiation." The U.S. did not follow up this approach to the French, despite an inquiry at the Quai by Bo on June 14 as to what had happened.

Private enterprise and American ingenuity entered the picture in July 1965, when Mr. Arkas-Dantov of the Dreyfus Fund applied through a French journalist friend to see Bo. The first Bo-Dantov meeting took place on July 16. Bo seemed very forthcoming, making references to self-determination, delay in the withdrawal of U.S. troops and not making much of U.S. bombings in the north. Against State Department wishes, Dantov saw Bo again on August 5. In response to a question, Bo said he would be prepared to receive a U.S. official if he makes clear the U.S. acceptance of the Four Points.

At this point, the USG moved in by dispatching Edmund Gullion, former U.S. DCM in Saigon but now a private citizen, to contact Bo. Bo (R) and Gullion (X) had four meetings: August 6, 15, 18, and September 3. Bo did not show up for an arranged fifth meeting, scheduled for September 7. Y, another ex-FSO, saw Bo only once and nothing was said, and Z never existed. It is obvious that "XYZ" should be renamed "X".

The talks between X and R represent the most serious mutual effort to resolve matters of substance between the U.S. and the DRV before and since.

It is striking that the first flirtations, from which the contact developed, were Bo's approaches to the Quai in May and June of 1965. This is just the time at which Seaborn returned from Hanoi with the conclusion that the "DRV is not now interested in any negotiations." Seaborn was turned off just as Bo apparently began an effort to awaken U.S. interest more directly in Paris. The Russians, who had tried to foster negotiations about Vietnam through a conference on Cambodia and in other ways, also expressed their unwillingness to try further at about this time.

2. X's Guidance -- Flexibility and Pressures

The U.S. was sending X with the intention of seeking peace from a position of U.S. strength. X was to show a desire for ending the conflict along lines "compatible with the Four Points, but he was also to say that the prolongation of the war" is bound to lead to progressively larger U.S. pressures and long-term China control of North Vietnam. X was to convey that pressures in the U.S. to widen the war were growing and that "it would be increasingly harder to exercise restraint."

X took this guidance seriously. At the end of the second meeting when R refused to accept X's formulation of a statement announcing the reconvening of the Geneva Conference, X threatened to call off all future contacts. It was R who demurred and urged the third meeting -- as he had taken the initiative in setting up the second. Except for the last meeting when R grew heated about recent U.S. escalations, R was serious and responsive. Throughout and even at this last meeting, there were no ideological harangues.

3. Convening a Conference

The most basic point to emerge from the X and R contacts with respect to convening a conference was made by R at the August 6 meeting. R said that there was a difference between "discussions" and "settlement." "There could not be settlement without recognition of the principles within the 4 Points." R did not indicate what "recognition" meant. Later, in an August 31 speech (and repeated in the DRV Memorandum of September 23), Pham Van Dong made this point more ambiguous, but did not change it. He stated: "This 4 Point stand must be solemnly accepted by the USG before a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be contemplated." This formulation, in turn, differed from Ho's demand for "tangible proofs" of U.S. acceptance on the 4 points. In the Dong speech and the DRV memo, U.S. acceptance of the 4 Points is pegged to a "political settlement" and not explicitly to starting negotiations. It is probable, nevertheless, that since DRV viewed the 4 points as "principles" and not, as the Americans called them, "preconditions," the DRV always intended that the U.S. in one way or another give evidence of acceptance prior to serious negotiations. Successful negotiations to the DRV had to be based on these principles. If United States would not accept the principles prior to negotiations, there could be no strong presumption on the DRV part that the negotiations would be successful.

These were the first of many distinctions that Hanoi was to make among words like contacts, talks, discussions, negotiations, and peace. In June 1966, Ronning learned from Trinh that neither the 4 nor the 5 points were preconditions for "talks" -- a new term at that time. If the U.S. stopped the bombing completely, Trinh told Ronning, the DRV would "talk." Ronning conveyed these distinctions to the USG, but they were lost sight of until the fall of 1967.

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The U.S. position throughout as enunciated in President Johnson's Johns Hopkins speech of April 1965, was for "unconditional discussions." If, however, the DRV were to demand preconditions, for example, a bombing halt, the U.S. would insist on reciprocity. In other words we would make no preconditions, but if the other side did so, we would have some of our own.

X and R reached agreement at their August 15 meeting on a Geneva Conference forum. R had previously told Duntov (at their second meeting) that Geneva was the "only possible" procedure for negotiations. At this same meeting with Duntov, R said that the UN would be folly since the Chinese are not represented. At the August 6 meeting between X and R, R rejected the UN and other interlocutors, saying that Geneva was a "valid base, since it brought the interested bodies together."

The DRV Foreign Ministry Memo of September 23, however, was less specific on these points. With respect to the UN, it confined its denunciation of the organization to the use of formal UN machinery, declaring only that it will regard as null and void any UN resolution and any "solution" which seeks UN intervention. This memo did not explicitly reject mediation attempts by the UN Secretary General and others in the UN organization. With respect to the Geneva Conference, the memo says that the Vietnam problem falls within the competence of the "participants" of the 1954 Geneva Agreements.

X and R, at their August 15 meeting even went so far as to discuss a statement to announce the reconvening of the Geneva Conference. X offered the following statement: "In order to secure and preserve the fundamental right of the Vietnamese people, etc., as affirmed in the Geneva Accords, a meeting of Geneva conferees would be held which would take up Pham Van Dong's 4 points and other propositions." R expressed agreement with the first part of the sentence, but disagreed with the latter. (The disagreement on the latter could have signalled continued DRV insistence on the need to accept the 4 Points as the basis for negotiations.)

The agreement that a Geneva Conference would be the appropriate forum was clear. What was not clear was the issue of "participants." The U.S. position was that we were prepared to negotiate with "any government," and that all elements of South Vietnamese society could participate in free elections. X was told, in his instructions for the third meeting, that the U.S. was opposed to coalition government now, but that "groups" could attend a peace conference and express their views.

The DRV position was tough but ambiguous. Ho, on August 15, implied that only the NLF could participate in an international conference, and stated that the Saigon authorities were "a creation of the Americans...." On August 31, Dong stated that the Front was the "only genuine representative of the South Vietnamese people," and the "real master of the situation." On September 23, Foreign Ministry Memo stated that there could be no

"negotiations on any South Vietnam problem without NFLSV having its decisive say." Later, on May 6, 1966, R said to Segouac that the NLF was the "only valid negotiator," but that certain groups like the Buddhists which were not dominated by the U.S. could participate. Because the other conditions necessary for convening a conference were never met, it remains unclear how far either side would have departed from its opening position.

With respect to participants other than the GVN and NLF, there was nothing said, but presumably this was not necessary. By virtue of their agreement on the reconvening of a Geneva Conference, it could have been assumed that all former participants in the 1954 conference would attend again.

4. The Bombing Issue

One of the interesting features of the R and X contacts was the relative absence from discussion of the bombing issue -- until their last meeting on September 3. In R's initial meeting with Duntov, he only mentioned the bombings in passing and with mild reproof. When, in the second meeting with R, X brought up the issue of reconvening the Geneva Conference, R did not mention U.S. bombings. At their August 18 meeting, the change began when R revealed to X that the DRV viewed the cessation of the bombings as "tangible evidence" of acceptance in principle of the 4 Points. From the August 31 Dong speech on, however, the issue was brought back to prominence. Dong raised the issue in a rather odd way. He said that the U.S. must "put an end to escalation (emphasis added) in air attacks against North Vietnam," prior to negotiations. In his September 3 meeting with X, R said that the U.S. had intensified bombings in the North and ground actions in the South in the last 15 days as an attempt to force negotiations on the DRV. R added: "Bombings must stop unilaterally, immediately, totally, and definitively. Then, there would be a possibility for negotiations." Again, on January 29, 1966, R indicated: "The pause in bombing is not negotiable...we have always demanded that these bombings stop as a prerequisite of any negotiations...."

In other words, the bombings did not receive any prominence at all until the third meeting when they were indicated as "tangible evidence," and they were not raised as a serious issue in dispute until the 4th and final meeting. One explanation of this may be that the DRV knew that the bombing issue would complicate the discussion of other issues, and it did not want to so complicate the discussions until the U.S. had revealed the full extent of the concessions that it might make. In any event, from this point on, the DRV position was that it would not trade anything for a cessation of the U.S. bombardments in the north. In March, 1966, the DRV made clear to Romning that the cessation of such bombardments was a prerequisite for "talks."

5. Opposing Settlement Proposals: The DRV's 4 Points and Ours

Both sides' settlement proposals nominally included the four principles laid down in the DRV's 4 Points (withdrawal of "foreign" military forces; non-intervention; self-determination for SVN; peaceful reunification), but they held quite different views on content.

The distance between them is illustrated by another topic they touched on, cease-fire provisions. Neither side wished an early cease-fire. Both feared it would permit the other to consolidate its position prior to the final settlement. In other words, both expected the final settlement to be much more to their liking than the status quo. (For the U.S. view, see 8/18/65; for the DRV, see 9/23/65.)

A. Withdrawal of "foreign" forces

The DRV 4 Points demanded the withdrawal of U.S. troops, military personnel, weapons, bases and alliances with SVN. Nothing was said publicly about NVA forces in SVN, but neither did DRV declaratory policy during XYZ specifically deny their presence. In private, when pressed by X, R did not deny DRV troop presence in SVN (8/18/65), or even that the 325th NVA Division was in SVN, but claimed it was not then engaged in military operations (9/3/65). After the contact had ended, again speaking privately, R said there were no regular northern troops in SVN, but that northern volunteers might have joined the NLF (1/27/66). While conceding little, this DRV posture permitted the discussions to include provisions for mutual troop withdrawal.

On the timing of U.S. withdrawal, X consistently argued that there would be no problem in the event of an agreement between the two sides on an internal solution for SVN, though the specifics he envisioned grew progressively less liberal as the episode went along. He told Danton in July that withdrawal would be a technical problem, as easily solved as with the French in 1954. It could take place over 2 or 3 years (7/16/65). || *sd probably*
To X in August, he said that the final settlement should see troop withdrawals completed (8/18/65). By September, R was telling X that U.S. troops must leave before elections were held (9/3/65). Several months *as in Laos* later, speaking to the journalist Sego, he gave this as Hanoi's concept for U.S. withdrawal:

"It contemplates three stages -- in the first stage, the US would agree on the principle of their departure before the South Vietnamese settled by themselves their problems, which cannot be resolved so long as a foreign army is on their national territory. The second stage is that of negotiation. The third stage is departure." (5/6/66)

The principle that troop withdrawal would have to be mutual was apparently accepted by R at the second meeting with X (8/18/65), and reaffirmed at the third (8/18/65). At the fourth, however, he pulled back completely and denied with agitation that there had been any inconsistency in his successive positions or between them and the official DRV position (9/3/65).

The US accepted in principle all the DRV demands regarding withdrawal at the first meeting with R, stipulating however that they apply to the DRV as well as SVN and that they include regrouping and redeployment of indigenous forces as well as withdrawal of foreign military and quasi-military personnel and weapons" (8/6/65). As X later explained, this included all persons with military functions and all support equipment related to the war effort. The regroupment provisions were intended to separate the combatants (8/18/65).

The U.S. did not specify the timing it thought appropriate for withdrawal, except to indicate mutually agreed stages as among the topics for negotiations. X was instructed to give North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies as the sole reason for the U.S. presence. If the infiltration stopped, the U.S. would go home (8/9/65). He stressed that withdrawal would have to be "phased" and "balanced" (meaning mutual and at rates to be negotiated between the two sides); R accepted these modifiers without inquiring into their meaning (8/15/65).

B. Non-interference

Although the two sides found different words to express this principle, the issue gave them little difficulty and was scarcely discussed by X and R. The U.S. noted that "a sovereign government should have the right to call for help if necessary in its own self-defense," and in other ways left room for our SEATO commitments to be observed. There is no indication of the DRV response to this reservation.

C. Self-determination for SVN

Before the contact between X and R was established, R had spoken to Dantov of self-determination as "the one basic premise" needed for a solution to the Vietnam problem (7/16/65). At his July 28 press conference, President Johnson said, "we will always insist that the people of SVN shall have the right of choice, the right to shape their own destiny in free elections in the south, or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision...." Dantov urged Do to see him again, suggesting that this statement had been influenced in some degree by his (Dantov's) report of their first meeting (End July).

The possibility of a convergence of views on this issue may have motivated the DRV in permitting the contact between X and R.

As the contact developed, though, US/DRV differences about what constituted self-determination simply came into sharper focus, undermining the "premise" on which agreement over the conditions for troop withdrawal might have rested. In the end, troop withdrawal and self-determination became a chicken-or-the-egg type of conundrum. As R parodied the U.S. position and rebutted it as follows: The U.S. "will withdraw from Vietnam 'as soon as the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone.'" In fact, the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone precisely after the Americans have left." (1/27/65)

The DRV 4 Points call for "the internal affairs of SVN to be settled by the SVN people themselves in accordance with the NLF Program...." This was amplified on many occasions, including Pham Van Dong's National Day address of August 31, 1965--between the third and fourth contacts--to mean that the NLF "is now the real master...in SVN. It must have a decisive say in the settlement of the SVN question." As R had done earlier with Duntov, Pham Van Dong heaped scorn on the "Saigon Quisling administration...." Prior to this speech, the issue was apparently passed over lightly by X and R. At the fourth and last meeting, R took a line similar to Pham Van Dong's speech and modified his earlier position to require U.S. troop withdrawal before elections in SVN (9/3/65). Much later, he explained himself to Segonzac. Without condemning the principle of elections, he asked, "How can elections be held in a country over which no authority is exercised?" Did he mean the exercise of authority is decisive, not the electoral process? No doubt. In which case, the question of who should organize the elections--the NLF with DRV help, or the GVN with U.S. help--would be the real issue.

The US envisaged no NLF role "as of right" in SVN (9/8/65), and would not guarantee a role for it before elections because to do so would be contrary to "free determination." Individual members of the NLF could participate in the political process. At most, the future of the NLF should be a matter for discussion, not something settled in principle before negotiations began (8/15/65). In the event of a ceasefire, it was our intention to insist on the GVN's right to operate throughout SVN (9/1/65).

D. Peaceful reunification

The two sides offered virtually identical wording in their provisions for peaceful reunification. The U.S. required that reunification come about "on the basis of free determination" (8/6/65), a phrase absent from the DRV's fourth point, but parallel to an elaboration given by R at the first meeting (8/6/65). R stated then, as he had previously and would again, that the DRV was not in a hurry to see reunification accomplished. Clearly, though, it did expect a settlement that would insure reunification ultimately, namely the NLF coming to power in SVN (7/16/65).

6. Ho/Bo Differences?

On the morning of the second meeting, Le Monde published an interview with Ho Chi Minh. Ho essentially reiterated the DRV's 4 Points, insisting at each turn on the NLF as the sole authentic representative of the SVN people and brushing aside the GVN--"there is no question of Saigon authorities, or creation of the Americans...." Thus he was for self-determination, on the basis of the NLF program. He accepted an autonomous SVN for as long as the SVN people desired, noting that reunification would come by free consent, according to the program of the NLF.

When asked a complex question--would the DRV enter discussions with the U.S. on withdrawal if the U.S. affirmed the principles of Geneva, and would an end to U.S. air strikes against the DRV be preconditions for a settlement--Ho replied, "To this end, the USG must give tangible proofs that it accepts the Four Point stand of the DRV...; it must immediately stop the air attacks..., stop forthwith the aggressive war against the south..., and withdraw from there all US troops and weapons" (8/15/65).

This aroused consternation in Washington, which wondered if he was making immediate US troop withdrawal a precondition for an "effort at settlement" (8/17/65). Given the elegance of the French newspaper's question, however, it is not at all clear what Ho meant. He could equally have been laying down preconditions for a termination of the war (rather than the opening of negotiations), or simply leveling a demand without making compliance a precondition for anything. At the third meeting, R assured X that his statements on phasing and balancing troop withdrawals were the accepted DRV position (8/18/65).

7. Why Did the Contact Break Down?

Until the last meeting between X and R, all was proceeding at a better than expected pace. At this September 3rd conversation, R turned cold. He insisted on immediate cessation of U.S. bombings, and he pulled back on his agreement for the staged withdrawal of forces from SVN. Undoubtedly, a decision was made after the third meeting to wipe the slate clean at the fourth--and then, to schedule the fifth just in case something new arose. What happened between August 18 (the third meeting) and September 3? Did, in fact, the breakdown of these conversations have anything to do with the surrounding events, or was it part and parcel of the DRV's negotiating strategy all along? Or, could it have had something to do with events and relations external to the contact itself, such as China?

Could the breakdown of conversations have been related to ground action in South Vietnam? It could have, but the major announcement on U.S. force inputs to this ground action was made by the President on

July 28; that is, well before the initial X and R meeting. If the DRV regarded President Johnson's announced U.S. force increase from 75,000 to 125,000 and his saying that, "additional forces will be needed later and they will be sent as requested" as a threat, they might not have allowed the meetings in the first place. But it could also be that the impact of this announcement and the impact of the U.S. forces actually on the ground and fighting in South Vietnam was not felt until a month later.

U.S. bombings in the North is another possible explanation for the breakdown. In his August 31 speech, Dong said: "To achieve these aggressive purposes, the U.S. imperialist further step up the escalation of the war in North Vietnam in an attempt to intimidate the Vietnamese people...and are threatening further escalation!" He accused the U.S. of "bombing and strafing densely populated areas, many hospitals...and public utility installations such as the Ban Thach Dam..." While there is no evidence on our attacking population and hospitals, it is true that we first struck the Ban Thach Hydropower Plant on August 23. Other U.S. first strikes in this period that would have affected Dong's speech were: Lang Ban RR Bridge on July 29, Nam Dinh Thermopower Plant on August 4, and the Bich Phuong Lock on August 23. Measured in sorties or tons, however, overall U.S. air activity in the north in August was not higher than the previous month, July.

Another possible explanation for the breakdown may lie in North Vietnam's relationship to the warring giants of the socialist world--China and the USSR. It was on September 2, 1965, that Lin Biao gave his famous wars of national liberation speech. Some scholars speculate that this speech surfaced previously existing differences between Hanoi and Peking over how to fight the war in Vietnam (the Chinese arguing for a more prolonged, lower keyed, approach and the Vietnamese for a more militant one) and how to order the political battle (the Chinese arguing for united front tactics and the Vietnamese pushing for social revolution).

It can also be argued that the DRV broke off the contact simply because it had accomplished some purpose. This purpose might have been, by seeming forthcoming and using the right words (e.g., self-determination), to see how far the Americans would go in indicating their fallback positions. Hanoi could have been testing the U.S. position after the bombing pause to see if it had stiffened or softened. To Hanoi, pause and subsequent escalation were signs that the war in SVN was going badly for us. Perhaps they reasoned that these signs would be reflected in new and softer U.S. objectives. Ho did deliver his first message to the French right after the bombing resumed, then inquired in June as to what had happened with it, and it was the U.S. that delayed making contact until August.

Hanoi and Washington had never had a private and direct talk about settlement terms. This may have seemed an easy first way of proceeding. Since the contact was not with an American official, the exchanges were always disownable, and in fact, R ultimately did renege on points of agreement. When it became clear that the U.S. was not about to make far-reaching concessions, Hanoi could have viewed this as a demonstration of clear intransigence and decided to break off.

Because the R and X exchanges were so responsive and productive and because these exchanges were severed so abruptly, no explanation is really satisfying. It seems that this dialogue between Americans and Vietnamese was as mysterious in its ending as it was fruitful and suggestive in its beginnings.

XYZ (MAI VAN BO CONTACTS): MAY 1965 - FEBRUARY 1966

May 19, 1965

French Foreign Ministry Asian Director told U.S. Embassy Political Counselor "in strict confidence" that on May 18, just prior to the resumption of U.S. bombings, Mai Van Bo (head of the DRVN Delegation, Paris) had made a fairly pressing approach to the French.

Bo wanted to understand that Hanoi's four points "were to be considered ~~not rpt not as prior conditions but rather as working~~ principles for a negotiation which should, in DRVN view, represent ultimate goal of settlement in Vietnam." Bo said that he was speaking with authorization, and the French source believed that the Bo approach was responsive to the U.S. suspension of bombing.

(Paris 6582).

May 20, 1965

Lucet, Director of Political Affairs of the French Foreign Office, called on the U.S. DCM in Paris to convey a message from Hanoi---although he said "we were not asked to convey message.."

He went on to deliver a message that substantially differed from the one transmitted by his own Asian Director. According to Lucet, "Bo stressed that the four points should not be 'isolated' from 'declaration' which followed." He went on: "The four points constituted 'best base' from which to find 'most just' solution. Recognition these 'principles' would create favorable conditions for solution problem and would 'open' possibility of convocation conference like Geneva, 1954."

In response to a question on U.S. withdrawal Bo agreed "exactly" that the withdrawal of American forces would depend upon the "conclusions of a negotiation." Bo went on: "If there were agreement on the 'basis', then a 'ways and means' of application of 'principles' would be found and in peaceful manner;... 'our suggestion humiliates no one'."

With respect to the discrepancy between this message and the public May 18 Hanoi communique denouncing "so called cessation bombings," Lucet said the latter was "for public consumption."

(Paris 6612).

May 22, 1965

State cabled appreciation for the Lucet information and asked that Lucet be told we continued to follow the matter with interest and that he should continue to keep us informed." (State 6056).

June 14, 1965

Bo called on Manac'h. Manac'h told Bo that his message of May 18 had been transmitted to the Americans, and Manac'h said the Americans were "deeply interested."

Bo asked if Manac'h could give him the name of the American diplomat with whom he discussed this matter. Manac'h did not do so.

(Paris 7071).

July, 1965

Mr. Urah Arkas-Duntov, a partner in the Dreyfus Fund, on his own tact, took steps to arrange a meeting with Mai Van Bo. Duntov contacted Messrs. M. Parisot, of France Soir, and Parisot, knowing that Eli Maissi, another journalist, had good connections with Bo, asked Maissi to arrange an interview for Duntov. Bo, at first, refused to see Duntov. Later, Maissi convinced Bo that such an interview might be an advantageous way of communicating to the U.S. at no political risk.

July 16, 1965 (First Duntov-Bo meeting)

Maissi and Parisot were present. The following were the main points of the meeting:

"1. Hanoi's Attitude toward Negotiations. Duntov asked why Hanoi would not negotiate. Bo responded that Hanoi did want to negotiate, and that there were ample contacts in which negotiations might take place. However, there must first be a basis for negotiations. Bo first said that the proper basis would be the Geneva Accords of 1954. He then added that these accords are often misinterpreted and misquoted, and that the true interpretation is found in the Four Points laid out by Pham Van Dong. Thus these formed the proper basis for negotiations.

"2. Unification of Viet-Nam. Bo stressed very strongly that Viet-Nam is one country and cannot be divided. When asked whether the US had not made clear its willingness to negotiate unconditionally, Bo replied that the President's Baltimore speech of April 7 was a trap, and that the President was really

laying down conditions by his insistence on the necessity of an independent South Viet-Nam and guarantees for such a South Viet-Nam.

"One of the participants asked Bo whether his position was not in conflict with statements by the National Liberation Front to the effect that the Front favored an independent South Viet-Nam. Bo seemed somewhat taken aback by this question, but recovered and said that this would be all right, since an 'independent' government in South Viet-Nam would in fact decide to join the north.

"3. Internal Solution in South Viet-Nam. Bo insisted, somewhat emotionally, that there was one basic premise, self-determination by the South Vietnamese people, and that if this was accepted, a solution was possible. He referred at different times to the phrase, 'self-determination,' and to the Liberation Front program for the South (insistence on which, of course, is the third of Pham Van Dong's Four Points). In referring to 'self-determination,' Bo explained that, if this principle was recognized, an independent government could be formed. However, he went on to say that no 'traitor' could be included, apparently meaning by this that at least the present South Vietnamese military leaders would be excluded.

"4. Withdrawal of US Forces. Bo was asked what time schedule would be required--in the event of an agreement for an independent South Viet-Nam--on the withdrawal of US forces. Bo replied that this was no problem and that it was a technical detail that could be worked out as it had been with the French in 1954. The withdrawal could be discussed and could take place over a two- or three-year period. Bo related US withdrawal clearly, however, to acceptance of the principles he had laid down for 'independence' and 'self-determination' in South Viet-Nam.

"5. Cease-fire or Cessation in Bombings. Bo mentioned the bombings of the North only in passing and with mild reproof. He gave no indication that a cessation of bombing was required before there could be discussions."

Duntov reported all this to the State Department on July 29.

End July

State judged the Bo statements to be in accord with the Nhan Dan editorial of July 20, 1965.

The background for the second Duntov-Bo meeting is quite confused. Duntov's story is that Maissi had phoned him, saying that Bo is very pleased with the President's press conference of July 28, 1965. Maissi asked Bo if there were any point in his seeing Duntov again and Bo said that it would be a good idea. Again, according to Duntov, Maissi then made the arrangements with Bo. Duntov conveyed this to the State Department and was told that "we are very interested in his information but that we would prefer that he hold off at this time." Duntov said that he understood.

Maissi's story is quite different. He said that on 30 July, Duntov telephoned him saying that he had conveyed the report of the first meeting to "certain friends in Washington," that he believed the President's press conference had been influenced to some degree by this report, and that this encouraged him to believe he should meet again with Bo.

August 5, 1965 (Second Duntov-Bo meeting)

Parisot and Maissi were again present.

Duntov told Bo that he had conveyed the results of the first meeting to friends in Washington. Bo said that he was not convinced of U.S. sincerity to negotiate.

Duntov asked Bo if he were prepared to receive an authorized USG official for the purpose of explaining the American position. Bo replied that if such an official will come to Paris, and if he makes it clear that the USG will accept the 4-point program, it would be possible to "halt the war."

Also with respect to the four points, Bo initially insisted that only the NLF should represent SVN in peace negotiations-- but subsequently implied this was a matter for the South Vietnamese people to decide.

With respect to the machinery for the negotiations, Bo said that the UN would be folly since the Chinese are not represented. Bo argued that the only possible machinery for negotiations is a revival of the Geneva Accords procedures.

TEXT OF A STATEMENT ON VIETNAM BY PRESIDENT JOHNSON
AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE OF JULY 28, 1965

"WE WILL STAND IN VIETNAM"

"....We have learned at a terrible and brutal cost that retreat does not bring safety and weakness does not bring peace.

"It is this lesson that has brought us to Vietnam. This is a different kind of war. ~~There are no marching armies~~ or solemn declarations. Some citizens of South Vietnam, at times with understandable grievances, have joined in the attack on their own government.

"But we must not let this mask ~~the~~ central fact that this is really war. It is guided by North Vietnam, and it is spurred by Communist China. Its goal is to conquer the South, to defeat American power, and to extend the Asiatic dominion of communism.

"There are great stakes in the balance.

"Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia cannot, by themselves and alone, resist growing might and the grasping ambition of Asian communism.

"Our power, therefore, is a very vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Vietnam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promise or in American protection.

"In each land the forces of independence would be considerably weakened and an Asia so threatened by Communist domination would certainly imperil the security of the United States itself.

"We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else.

TOP SECRET - NOFORN

"Nor would surrender in Vietnam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps ever larger and crueller conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history.

"Moreover, we are in Vietnam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American Nation. Three Presidents--President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President--over 11 years have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valiant nation."

.....

"What are our goals in that war-stained land?

"First, we intend to convince the Communists that we cannot be defeated by force of arms or by superior power. They are not easily convinced....

"I have today ordered to Vietnam the Air Mobile Division and certain other forces which will raise our fighting strength from 75,000 to 125,000 men almost immediately. Additional forces will be needed later, and they will be sent as requested. This will make it necessary to increase our active fighting forces by raising the monthly draft call from 17,000 over a period of time to 35,000 per month, and for us to step up our campaign for voluntary enlistments.

"After this past week of deliberations, I have concluded that it is not essential to order Reserve units into service now...."

.....

"Second, once the Communists know, as we know, that a violent solution is impossible, then a peaceful solution is inevitable.

"We are ready now, as we have always been, to move from the battlefield to the conference table. I have stated publicly and many times, again and again, America's willingness to begin unconditional discussions with any government at any place at any time...."

.....

"I made a similar request at San Francisco a few weeks ago, because we do not seek the destruction of any government, nor do we covet a foot of any territory, but we insist and we will

always insist that the people of South Vietnam shall have the right of choice, the right to shape their own destiny in free elections in the south, or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision, and they shall not have any government imposed upon them by force and terror so long as we can prevent it.

"This was the purpose of the 1954 agreements which the Communists have now cruelly shattered. If the machinery of those agreements was tragically weak, its purposes still guide our action...."

.....

August, 1965 - U.S. Reaction

At this point, Washington decided that Duntov should be kept out of the picture, and that an authorized but disownable U.S. representative should contact Bo directly. The U.S. representative was Edmund Gullion, former U.S. DCM in Saigon.

For purposes of the negotiating track, Gullion is referred to as X and Mai Van Bo is referred to as R.

Initial talking points for X:

1. These were to be simple and vague, but to set limits in which talks can safely take place.
2. X was to show desire for peace, and a free, independent, and unified Vietnam.
3. X was to say that the prolongation of conflict is bound to lead to progressively larger US pressures and long-term China control in NVN.
4. X was to insist that nothing can force the US out. Indeed, X was to say that pressures in the US to a wider war were growing and that it would be increasingly harder to exercise restraint.
5. If R does not seem receptive to a second meeting, then proceed as follows:

Theme: US is flexible to some degree. See, for example, the President's press conference of 28 July.

- a. US ready to discuss the four points.
- b. People of SVN have a right to peace and to determine

their own destiny in free elections in SVN or throughout Vietnam under international supervision.

c. The four points, in some measure, parallel our own. Are we right in assuming these points are not stated as the only basis for starting talks and that other points can be discussed?

d. The four points mention withdrawal of forces. The US says it will do so once SVN "is secure from outside aggression."

e. We did not ask SVN to be our ally or to keep US bases there -- although a "sovereign government should have the right to call for help if necessary in its own self-defense."

f. US is not opposed to unification "at some future time under democratic processes."

Purpose of X's mission:

Primary -- To ascertain whether any serious purpose to negotiate exists and, if so, on what basis? Secondary -- R as possible contact? Third, clarify the four points (pre-requisite or best basis, timing on unification and elections, a settlement in accord with NLF program, timing on withdrawal). Fourth -- Collateral intelligence (DRV attitude on the Indian proposal, UN, China, NLF, and the possible use of Laos and Cambodia as a gambit for talks).

August 6, 1965 - First meeting between X and R

1. It was clear to X that R was aware that report of this meeting would go to US officials, and X believed that R spoke and made comments on instructions.

2. R said "convening of discussion should stipulate withdrawal as one of objectives...but confirmed that there would be 'modality' including staging and timing."

3. R rejected any UN intervention and other interlocutors such as France, Ghana, and the Commonwealth countries. Geneva, he said, was a "valid base, since it brought 'the interested bodies' together."

4. On reunification -- R said that it could take a long or short time but only on the basis of "free decision and consultation between Vietnamese people." Pending reunification, R expressed desire for freer movement between the zones, more trade, etc.

5. R said that the NLF was solely qualified to represent the South.

6. R seemed to agree with X's statements about China to the effect that Hanoi should be worried about increasing Chinese influence and control.

7. On the four points, R said that there is a difference between "discussion and settlement." "There could not be settlement without recognition of the principles within the four points." This is the main point in the initial meeting.

8. R wanted to know U.S. reaction to a whole series of questions. R did not get a chance to ask questions since X went on to his pre-planned discussion about the U.S. version of the four points.

9. R says that he wants to ensure understanding of the DRV position and that contacts could be continued. R, himself, then suggested a date for the next meeting.

10. There was no mention whatsoever of US bombing in NVN.

11. X handed R a U.S. version of the four points. It was quite similar to the one we transmitted to the North Vietnamese in Rangoon in January of 1966.

"Point I - The basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity are recognized as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. Obtaining compliance with the essential principles in the Accords is an appropriate subject for immediate, international discussions without preconditions and subsequent negotiations. Such discussions and negotiations should consider, among other things, appropriate means, including agreed stages, for the withdrawal of foreign military and quasi-military personnel and weapons from South and North Viet-Nam; the dismantling of foreign military bases in both areas; the cancellation of military alliances in contravention of the Accords; and the regrouping and redeployment of indigenous forces.

"Point II - Strict compliance with the military provisions of the Geneva Accords must be achieved in accordance with schedules and appropriate safeguards to be agreed upon in the said discussions and subsequent negotiations.

"Point III - The internal affairs of South and North Viet-Nam must be settled by the South and North Vietnamese peoples themselves in conformity with the principles of self-determination without any foreign interference.

"Point IV - The issue of reunification of Viet-Nam must be decided peacefully, on the basis of free determination by the peoples of South and North Viet-Nam without foreign interference."

August 9, 1965 - McGeorge Bundy memo to the President

Talking points for next X meeting with R:

1. Let R do the talking this time and see if there is any give in his position.
2. Make clear U.S. interest in "unconditional Geneva Conference."
3. Instructions:
 - a. Purpose -- set stage for formal negotiations if possible.
 - b. Seek a no preconditions Geneva Conference and timing thereof.
 - c. On NLF -- Throw ball in R's court. What would he suggest, recognizing the U.S. view on negotiations between governments?
 - d. Stress that the sole reason for the U.S. presence in SVN is North Vietnamese infiltration of men and supplies. If infiltration stops, the U.S. will go home. This is a matter for Hanoi and no one else. Withdrawal of all forces must be the product of negotiations, not the preliminary.
 - e. If R brings up bombing, say that U.S. must view "suspension or cessation in the context of adequate reciprocal actions."
 - f. Would R want conference on Vietnam alone, or Vietnam plus Laos and Cambodia? How would he want the conference convened -- by invitation from the co-chairmen, privately, publicly, or by direct US-Vietnamese means?
 - g. U.S. envisages no NLF role as of right in SVN. Is this really a precondition of the DRV?
 - h. Pick up R's suggestion about greater contacts between the zones.

August 15, 1965 - Ho-Davillers interview in Le Monde

"Question: Does the position of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam remain that which was defined by

Premier Pham Van Dong on 8 April, namely the South Vietnamese people must be left to solve their own affairs themselves without foreign interference and on democratic bases?

"Answer: That's right, and this on the basis of the program of the NFLSV, the sole authentic representative of the South Vietnam people.

"Question: Is the Democratic Republic of Vietnam ready to accept, so long as the South Vietnamese people will so desire, the existence of an autonomous South Vietnam, neutral of course, but disposed to establish with the north the relations implied by fraternity and a common nationality?

"Answer: Of course. Along with preparations for the national reunification of Vietnam which will be carried out through peaceful means, on the basis of the free consent of the north and the south, according to the program of the NFLSV and the program of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, our entire people are now struggling with their main and might against the U.S. aggression in our country to defend the DRV, liberate South Vietnam, and achieve peaceful reunification, highest goal of all the Vietnamese.

"Question: In case the U.S. Government would solemnly reaffirm its will to respect the basic principles of the Geneva agreements -- namely, unity and independence of Vietnam and prohibition of any base and any presence of foreign troops on its soil -- would the Government of the DRV agree to discuss with it the conditions and guarantees for disengagement which this U.S. declaration would imply? Also, in your opinion, is an end to the U.S. air attacks against the DRV territory a sine qua non condition leading to a settlement of the Vietnam problem?

"Answer: To this end, the U.S. Government must give tangible proofs that it accepts the four-point stand of the Government of the DRV which conforms to the essential political and military clauses of the 1954 Geneva agreement on Vietnam; it must immediately stop the air attacks against DRV territory, stop forthwith the aggressive war against the south of our country, and withdraw from there all U.S. troops and weapons. That is peace in honor; there is no other way out.

"Question: Do you think, Mr. President, that the solution to the Vietnam problem depends directly on the Hanoi and Washington Governments -- without the holding of an international conference -- or do you think that it rests essentially with the NFLSV and the Vietnamese authorities in Saigon to find a settlement?

"Answer: The four-point stand of the Government of the DRV gives a clear answer to this question, and there is no question of Saigon authorities, a creation of the Americans which is cursed by our people, and which nobody in the world takes seriously."

August 15, 1965 - Second meeting between X and R.

1. "R was rigid and even retrograde."
2. R said that Hanoi understood pressures in the US, but he implied that the American people would be opposed to the continuation of the war.
3. X asked if R had thoughts on U.S. version of the four points. R said that the U.S. interpretation was not a "correct solution." R did not take a clear position on the four points being stipulated or accepted in advance of the conference. R seemed to reject the U.S. version of the four points, but not definitively and finally.
4. X and R agreed on a Geneva Conference forum, but their discussion on preconditions was left vague. R tried to argue that the DRV did not oppose the Cambodian Conference initiative but was merely accepting Sihanouk's insistence on NLF participation in the government of SVN. X rebutted this saying that Sihanouk had ended up saying that both Saigon and the NLF could be represented.
5. R said that "Hanoi had noted President Johnson's reference to some form of meeting with NLF, but it was up to the US to give concrete details." He then launched into a tirade against the Saigon government.
6. X returned to the issue of getting the conference started. R did not mention bombing. R said the US "must leave Vietnam alone to work out its destiny...claimed that President Johnson recently said US must remain in Vietnam and could never leave it." X denied this.
7. X went back to the issue of infiltration and the withdrawal of all forces, saying that the U.S. was ready to put its promise of six months withdrawal to test. X said that withdrawal would have to be phased and balanced with a holding back of North Vietnamese forces as well. R indicated agreement. R then said "these accusations" of DRV activity in SVN are only recent -- the US has been sabotaging Vietnam since 1954.
8. R asked if X had seen Ho's response to Devillers. X said no, since he had not read the day's papers yet.
9. X returned to the issue of getting the conference going and discussed the terms of announcing such conference. X offered the

following statement: "In order to secure and preserve the fundamental right of Vietnamese people, etc., as affirmed in the Geneva Accords, a meeting of Geneva conferees would be held which would take up Pham Van Dong's four points and other propositions." R expressed agreement with first part of sentence, but disagreed with the latter. X then said that maybe there was no use in future meetings. R was eager to set another meeting in case there should be "some change in the points of confrontation."

10. X noted some flexibility on R's part on the issue of troop withdrawal and NLF representation.

Instructions for next meeting

1. X should be tough, indicating that his reading of the Ho-Devillers interview was very discouraging.

2. U.S. will not guarantee role for the NLF before elections because to do so would be contrary to "free determination." However, South Vietnamese citizens in the NLF/VC could participate fully in the political process. Would Hanoi buy this, or, at least, discuss it?

3. Does Ho's interview really mean that the DRV would buy two separate Vietnams as long as South Vietnam desired it? X should suggest more definitive machinery for the free plebescite than existed in 1954.

4. In his interview, Ho asked for "tangible evidence" of U.S. acceptance of the four points. He said prior withdrawal of U.S. forces was required before "effort at settlement." (There is a clear conflict here between Ho's statements and R's.) R had not mentioned bombing -- as Ho most explicitly did in his interview -- or even a cease-fire. He may fear cease-fire effect on NLF just as we fear its effect on GVN legitimacy and control.

August 18, 1965 - Third meeting between X and R

1. This was the most positive meeting to date. R: (a) revealed fall-back position from the Ho interview, and (b) pin-pointed bombing as "tangible evidence" of acceptance in principle of the four points; (c) queried the meaning of X's four points, showing serious consideration thereof, and (d) stressed the desirability of a further meeting.

2. R did not reject the idea that a formula on South Vietnamese representation at the Conference table could be worked out if "other obstacles removed." R tried to get X to make another move on representation.

3. R said reunification could "wait some time." Like X, R insisted on the word "stages." On mechanisms for elections and supervision, R did not object to X's formulations.

4. Bombing issue re-emerges as the key DRV objective.

5. R said that troop withdrawals should be "phased," but that the final settlement should see troop withdrawals completed. X indicated that troop withdrawals must be "balanced" as well. R did not deny DRV troop presence in the South. Contrary to Ho, R insisted that his statements on phasing and balancing of troop withdrawals was the accepted DRV position.

6. R asked for clarification in detail of X's four points:

a. He did not like the word "compliance" and preferred "execution" or "acceptance."

b. Did "quasi military" mean men or weapons, or both? X said it meant all persons with military functions and all support equipment related to the war effort.

c. R asked for the meaning of regrouping and redeployment. X responded that one word was more static than the other, but that the key element was separation of combatants at some stage.

d. R asked about the meaning of the phrase "foreign personnel." X said that meant all foreign personnel.

7. R referred to "separation of combatants." X noted that R's interest in this issue was very tricky and could lead to VC consolidation of territory in the South. R said that this issue was very complicated.

U.S. Talking Points -- Where we stand in the talks and where we go from here

1. Two positive signs -- withdrawal and reunification issue.

a. Hanoi through R is not insisting on prior withdrawal and even envisages DRV balanced and phased withdrawal.

b. Hanoi accepts X's reunification formulation and the idea of phasing.

2. Remaining issues in dispute:

a. DRV insistence on the four points.

b. Conditions for cessation of bombing.

c. NLF representation.

d. Terms of the cease-fire (but this issue is not an obstacle to the inception of the Conference).

3. On X's point three, X should press the U.S. self-determination formula -- at least to some sort of verbal agreement.

4. On the bombing issue:

a. Hanoi is clear in its insistence on bombing cessation before the Conference can begin, and

b. We are clear that we will stop only if the DRV ceases infiltration and there is a sharp reduction in military activity in SVN.

5. On the NLF, we should:

a. Reject the Algerian analogy.

b. Say this is a matter for Saigon and the VC to decide.

c. Stick to the no-coalition-now formula, and

d. Make clear that other "groups" could attend the Conference and express their views.

6. On the issue of the full cease-fire, we should insist on the GVN right to operate throughout SVN.

7. In his next meeting with R, X should:

a. Concentrate on his formulation of the four points (which have gained legitimacy by the Rusk TV interview).

b. Ascertain what the DRV would give for cessation of U.S. bombing, and

c. Suggest a formula of reductions in incidents in SVN (like French/Algerian agreement) as a possible DRV response to a bombing cessation.

September 2, 1965 - Pham Van Dong Report at National Day Meeting, 31 August

"But no difficulty whatsoever could force our people to retreat, and no enemy whosoever could intimidate us. With seething hatred and undaunted determination, all our compatriots from north to south rose up like one man and waged a nationwide and all-sided patriotic war in accordance with the appeal by our party and President Ho Chi Minh: . . . We would rather sacrifice everything than lose our independence. We are determined not to be enslaved again. The hour of struggle for national salvation has struck.

Let us make sacrifices till our last drop of blood in order to defend our country. In spite of hardships imposed by the war of resistance, with a spirit of determination to make sacrifices, our people will certainly win victory.

"Soon after the DRV's founding and even after the outbreak of the resistance war in South Vietnam, we entered into negotiations with the French colonialists on many occasions and concluded with them several agreements and a modus vivendi in an effort to preserve peace. But to the French colonialists the signing of agreements was only a move designed to gain time and to prepare military forces and make plans for further aggression. It was only when our victories had made it clear to them that they could never conquer Vietnam and subdue our people and that further military adventures would only result in still heavier defeats that peace could be restored on the basis of the recognition of our national rights: This is a clear lesson of history, a lesson on relations with the imperialists which our people will never forget."

.....

"The NFLSV, now controlling more than four-fifths of South Vietnam's territory and over two-thirds of its population, is the only genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam. The front's international prestige and influence increase with every passing day. The front is now the real master of the situation in South Vietnam. It must have a decisive say in the settlement of the South Vietnam question. In the meantime, the Saigon quisling administration has unmasked itself more and more clearly as the U.S. imperialists' henchman, as traitor to its country. It is hated by the people and regarded by world opinion as a puppet unworthy of notice."

.....

"....The U.S. aggressors think that by launching air raids against the north they can intimidate our people both in North and in South Vietnam and menace the peoples of the socialist countries and other parts of the world. In reply to this threat our people both in North and in South Vietnam, far from flinching, have dealt, are dealing, and will deal ever stronger blows at the U.S. aggressors and their agents...."

"The socialist camp is more and more powerful; all socialist countries are extending wholehearted support and assistance to our people; close to us, like the lips and the teeth, are the staunch Chinese people; always side by side with us are the peoples of the mighty Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries."

"A few years ago the U.S. President and U.S. military and political circles often made arrogant statements. They said the Viet Cong must be wiped out, that they are resolved to pacify South Vietnam, and that the national liberation war in South Vietnam must be defeated to set a good example for the world. But now their tone has changed. In his speech on 28 July President Johnson even began to talk about his readiness to discuss Hanoi's proposals, to mention the question of reunifying Vietnam, and the NFLSV. Why is there such a change? Is that an indication of Washington's willingness for peace?

"Replying to this question, we must consider not the statements by the U.S. ruling circles, but their deeds. What have they done? They have been intensifying the aggressive war in South Vietnam and stepping up the escalation in the north. They have decided to dispatch all at once 50,000 more U.S. combat troops and still more in the future to South Vietnam and at the same time are making preparations in all fields for expansion of the war in this area.

"In a word, President Johnson talks about peace in an attempt to cover up his war schemes; the more he talks about peace the more he steps up the war...."

"In order to expose the U.S. imperialists as aggressors and warmongers, we call on the world's people, including the American people, to further push forward the movement demanding that they stop the aggressive war in South Vietnam, put an end to the escalation in air attacks against North Vietnam, implement the Geneva agreements, accept the four-point stand of the DRV Government and the stand expounded in the 22 March 1965 statement of the NFLSV. Only in this way could there be a genuine and lasting peace in this area and could peace be safeguarded in other parts of the world."

"....To put an end to the war in Vietnam and deter similar wars in other parts of the world, it is necessary to resolutely stay the hands of the U.S. aggressors and warmongers, the source of all types of unjust wars."

"....To bow down before the threats of the U.S. imperialists or to compromise with them would constitute an act of encouragement fraught with incalculably serious consequences.... That is why the entire world has unanimously and strongly protested against the U.S. escalation of the war to North Vietnam."

"....The purpose of the Vietnamese people's bold struggle has been fully embodied in the four-point stand of the DRV Government."

"This is the sole correct stand of peace which has been recognized by world public opinion as the only basis for a settlement of the Vietnam problem. This four-point stand fully conforms to the most important political and military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam, and the whole world is now of the view that these agreements must be correctly implemented. This four-point stand must be solemnly accepted by the U.S. Government before a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be contemplated."

September 3, 1965 - Fourth meeting between X and R

1. R took a line similar to the Pham Van Dong speech. This was a retrogression from previous talks in two very important respects:

- a. U.S. troops must leave before elections, and
- b. U.S. intensification of bombings in the North and ground actions in the South in the last 15 days was viewed by the DRV as an attempt to force negotiations on the DRV. R said that the bombings must stop "unilaterally, immediately, totally, and definitively." Then, he said, there would be a "possibility for negotiations."

2. R, when pressed, did not deny that the 325th was in SVN, but claimed it was not now engaged in military operations.

3. X offered a formula of "parallel but ostensibly unlinked" actions to halt the bombings, possibly synchronized by the third party. X said that U.S. was showing restraint and has not hit a number of sensitive targets. R said that thousands in the North were being killed.

"The DRV Government solemnly declares that the U.S. authorities must stop their criminal war acts against the DRV. They have no right to impose any condition on the DRV Government....

"....Yet the U.S. Government refuses to recognize it as the sole genuine representative of the people of South Vietnam. It has declared that it does not regard the front as an independent party in negotiations. This further exposes its talks about negotiations as a mere swindle. There cannot be any negotiations on the South Vietnam problem without the NLFSV having its decisive say."

"The DRV Government has on repeated occasions declared that internationally speaking the consideration of the U.S. Government's war acts against the DRV and the U.S. war of aggression in South Vietnam falls within the competence of the participants in the 1954 Geneva conference on Indochina, and not of the United Nations. Any U.N. resolution in furtherance of the above U.S. scheme will be null and void and will completely discredit the United Nations...."

"To settle the Vietnam problem it is essential to remove the roots of the serious situation in Vietnam--U.S. aggression. Any approach which puts the aggressor and the victim on the same footing or which does not proceed from the real situation in Vietnam will fail to bring about a settlement of the Vietnam problem."

"This stand also proceeds from the legitimate aspirations of the Vietnamese people in both zones, as embodied in the program of the Vietnam Fatherland Front and that of the NLFSV; namely, peace, independence, unity, and democracy."

"The Vietnamese people and the DRV Government earnestly call on the governments and peoples of the world to resolutely struggle and demand that the U.S. Government accept the four-point stand of the DRV Government. The U.S. Government must put an immediate end to the air war against the DRV and completely stop encroaching on the latter's sovereignty and security. It must immediately end the war of aggression in South Vietnam and withdraw all U.S. troops and weapons from there...."

"The four-point stand of the DRV Government is enjoying an ever-warmer sympathy and support from the peace-loving governments and peoples all over the world. It is the sole correct

basis for a settlement of the Vietnam problem. Any solutions at variance with it are inappropriate and so are any solutions which seek U.N. intervention in the Vietnam situation, because such solutions are fundamentally contrary to the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam."

"The U.S. Government must solemnly declare its acceptance of this four-point stand before a political settlement of the Vietnam problem can be considered."

November 1, 1965 - X introduces Y by letter to R

Instructions for Y:

1. Stress building pressures in the U.S. for escalation -- not a threat but a fact.
2. Take an anti-Chinese tack.
3. Develop theme of Asian economic development and aid.
4. DRV Aide Memoire, September 23, 1965:
 - a. Asserts U.S. insists on keeping forces in SVN. With respect to this, pursue the idea of stages.
 - b. Asserts U.S. insists on separate Vietnams forever.
 - c. Seeming change on point three -- now NLF "must have decisive say."
 - d. What is meant by "solemnly declaring acceptance of four points -- stopping all action, withdrawal or agreement to withdraw, bombing cessation?"
 - e. Rules out any DRV response to a bombing cessation.

November 18, 1965 - First meeting of Y and R

1. R seemed puzzled Y had no new knowledge to convey.
2. UNR Deputy Hauret tells Wylie (Cultural Attache) that R may have something to communicate to the U.S.
3. On 29 December, R says (unconfirmed) that he would like to meet with Gleysteen, senior officer, Political Section.

December 29, 1965 - Instructions for Y

1. Y should indicate to R knowledge of Deptel 202/Rangoon.
2. Y can indicate that possible DRV response to a bombing cessation would be "a clear major reduction in level of VC military activity and terrorism in SVN."

On January 1, 1966, Y tries to contact R and is told that R is sick.

January 3, 1966 - Meeting of Y and Jean (Vo Van Sung), second or third man in DRV delegation

1. Jean said that the DRV four points "must be basis of solution."
2. Jean accepted papers (Rangoon and French translation of X's four points), but had no message to transmit.

January 11, 1966 - R report encouraging intermediaries

1. Senator McGovern
2. Kingsbury-Smith
3. Sanford Gottlieb

who is this?

January 13, 1966 - Meeting of Y and Jean

Nothing transpires.

January 27, 1966

- Bo Conversation with Left-of-Center French Journalist
- Statements by Bo on U.S. Peace Offensive (14 points) (CSDB 312/00280-66)

"2. Asked to comment on the United States peace offensive with regard to Vietnam, Bo replied as follows:

"With their peace offensive the Americans tried to create a double illusion. First, the illusion that they had made concessions. In fact, their fourteen points show absolutely no change of position from before. Each principle they state is followed by a condition that makes the principle unworkable, i.e. that denies the principle. They say that they will withdraw from Vietnam 'as soon as the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone.' In fact, the Vietnamese will be left to solve their problems alone precisely after the Americans have left. I could give you more examples of how each of their fourteen points is a statement of principle coupled with a condition that denies the principle.

"The second illusion created by their peace offensive is that they have 'accepted three of our four points,' as Dean Rusk said. But let us look at the remaining point, i.e., point number three. That point states that South Vietnam should apply the program of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLFV). That program consists of independence, democracy, neutrality, peace, and peaceful reunion of the two Vietnams. In rejecting point number three, the Americans in fact reject the three points that they claim to accept. You see, one must look at the heart of the matter. The Americans have not budged an inch in their position. They are not willing to 'give' anything. They want to hang on to Vietnam. Their bombings have failed. Our Prime Minister said, 'Nobody, not even children are afraid of the bombings;' that is the heart of the matter, that is our victory. Of course, our roads, bridges, schools, and hospitals are sacred to us, dear to us. The Americans gambled on that; they thought that we would rather save them than fight. They failed. Their ground escalation and ground war have failed. We have downed 200 planes and killed 20,000 Americans. Our victories are tremendous. So, having failed to bring us to our knees by bombings and by ground war, they have tried to force our hand by putting pressure on world opinion in order

to have others put pressure on us and lead us to the negotiation table--only to accept the American conditions. That was the meaning of the peace offensive. They wanted to bring many countries to force us to sit down and accept the American conditions. That was the 'content' of their sincerity: When we speak of sincerity we must define the word, find out what is the 'content' of American sincerity. They are sincere in wanting to stay in Vietnam and in wanting us to sit down and accept that as a fact. They are in an impasse and they are going to sink further and further into the impasse. We are prepared and we will wait for them to bomb Haiphong and Hanoi. The price for this will become higher and higher for them; they will have to pay more money and suffer more casualties. We are not going to be deterred by any type of escalation. Aside from that, while the 'peace offensive went on' the Americans continued to expand their military and logistic infrastructure, to prepare the way for a wider, bigger, wilder, longer war--not for a retreat.

"3. Asked about the bombing pause, Bo stated:

"The pause in bombing is not negotiable. The Americans unilaterally violate the territorial integrity of a nation and then stop and expect something in exchange for it? That is mad. We have always demanded that these bombings stop as a prerequisite of any negotiations but the stopping of bombing is not enough.

"4. Asked what he would consider as a gesture on the American side that would show willingness, i.e. 'sincerity with content,' to negotiate, Bo replied:

"There are several things that they could do: recognizing the Front as the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people is one; stopping the bombings in the North and aggression in the South are others.

"5. The interviewer pointed out that many discussions have taken place about whether North Vietnam wants the United States to withdraw its troops before any negotiations or whether American acceptance of the four points in principle, without withdrawal of its troops, would be sufficient for North Vietnam to negotiate. He asked what the true North Vietnamese position on this question was. Bo smiled, appearing slightly embarrassed, and replied:

"Each thing in its own good time. We are now faced with escalation, with more war. If the Americans ever decide to leave our country and by certain practical

concrete gestures show to us that they mean it, then we can find ways and means for a settlement for their departure; then we can solve the problem that will arise. So why speculate? As for now, the Americans do not accept our four points and want to stay in Vietnam. If some day they accept our four points, then we can look for solutions to the problems that will arise on how to make their acceptance of the four points concrete.

(Source Comment: This was Bo's way of saying, or of hinting without stating, that the departure of United States troops was not a pre-condition to negotiations. I am categorical about that, i.e. that he tried to convey this impression.)

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"6. Asked whether he did not think, as some do, that the Americans did not want peace but that they wanted to use the peace offensive to bring about an agreement with Hanoi so as not to escalate the war on either side, to maintain it within its present size or perhaps decrease it on both sides, Bo replied: 'C'est tire par les cheveux' (that is far-fetched). Bo repeated that the peace offensive was the result of American failure to bring the NLFV or Hanoi to their knees and was but an attempt to bring them to their knees by diplomatic means, which were as heavy handed as their military ones.

"7. When asked if Aleksandr N. Shelepin's visit to North Vietnam had been useful, Bo smiled broadly and said, 'Very!' This contrasted with Bo's comments on Chinese and Soviet help made at a previous interview on 30 September 1965 when he was restrained and polite in saying that these countries had helped North Vietnam. This time, at mention of Shelepin, Bo smiled broadly and was very dramatic although maintaining his traditional coolness of manners. Bo said, 'The Soviets are giving us substantially increased material and military aid.' Asked if the North Vietnamese were satisfied with Russian aid, Bo said 'very satisfied' and added, 'Shelepin's trip was but the symbol of the increase of Russian aid to us.' The interviewer noted that the Russian communique and the North Vietnamese communique issued in Hanoi were slightly different and asked if this did not mean that Shelepin had pressured the Vietnamese to be more moderate and had indirectly worked for the Americans. Bo smiled and answered, 'I can only repeat to you that officially and privately, in name and in fact, the Russians approve of our struggle, back it, and are increasingly with us.'

"8. When asked if his statements meant that North Vietnam had missiles capable of destroying Saigon in reprisal if Hanoi were bombed, Bo smiled--it seemed a secret, happy smile--and said, 'I cannot go into such details for obvious reasons, but, yes, the Russians have significantly contributed to our defenses.'

"9. When asked why Soviet missiles did not shoot down as many American planes as expected, Bo said this was because the missiles were manned by North Vietnamese. If the North Vietnamese had asked the Soviets to man them, Bo said, they would have had to ask for Chinese Communist personnel as well, and the North Vietnamese thought they could handle things by themselves. Bo said that now the North Vietnamese were getting more experience and training.

"10. Bo would not answer a question as to the presence of Soviet military personnel in North Vietnam.

"11. To a question as to whether Nguyen Van Chi represented the NLF/VS in France, Bo responded rather contemptuously that Chi was 'just a Vietnamese gentleman who lives in France' and represented nobody.

"12. When it was suggested to Bo, to provoke a reaction, that manifestations of dissent in the United States by students and others would not persuade President Johnson to stop the war, but would only serve to provoke indignation and raise prospects of a new 'McCarthyism' and even fascism in America, Bo showed skepticism. He said that he did not have a simplistic view of the United States, and that it was true that progressive action normally brought about reaction, as in France in 1956, but that he did not believe that this would lead to fascism in the United States, where the Government, after all, was obliged to take public opinion into account. Bo spoke at length on the reasons he did not think that public opinion would harden in the United States. While he agreed to a point with statements that there were no proletarians in the United States and that most of the people were bourgeois and prosperous and therefore backed the Government to defend their advantages, he seemed profoundly convinced that public opinion in the United States is reacting more and more against the war in Vietnam and that the high cost of the war and loss of American lives will eventually lead the United States to want to get out of Vietnam. Bo quoted television commentator David Schoenbrun, a French general, and others to back up his case. He presented a long argument about the Americans and the atomic bomb, which he said could kill a lot of people and was not something to be despised and ignored, but he said what ultimately counted was man-man's brain. The Americans, Bo said, rely only on machines, and that is their weakness; Europe has a solid cultural infrastructure--thousands of years of history--the Americans do not. Bo said the Americans were not like other people, and that their blind faith in machinery and mechanical devices would be their doom. He said the atomic bomb was "not the end of the world," and that the human factor was more important. He said that the whole world hated the Americans; they were the most hated people in history.

"13. To a question as to whether Hanoi had pulled some troops back as a result of the American peace offensive, Bo said there were no northern troops in South Vietnam--at least not regular troops. He said that North Vietnam was backing the NFLSV morally and materially and that North Vietnamese volunteers might have joined the NFLSV but that they were fighting on their own."

May 6, 1966 - Bo meeting with Adalbert de Segonzac of France Soir

Bo told Segonzac that "the essential thing is to find out whether or not the Americans are willing to leave." Bo related that the internal situation in North Vietnam had improved greatly over what it was in the first months of the U.S. bombings. In fact, he said: "The country is much better off now than it was before the bombings because it is receiving from the communist countries a flood of foodstuffs and other useful products in much greater quantities than in the past."

Bo gave Segonzac the impression of being intransigent on the question of NLF representation at a conference. To Bo, the Front "is the only valid negotiator." Bo did say, however, that certain groups that are not dominated by the U.S. can also have their say, for example, "the Buddhists are patriots."

Bo showed skepticism about the possibility of holding free elections. "How can elections be held in a country over which no authority is exercised?" Bo did not condemn the principle of elections.

Bo freely admitted that Hanoi was helping the VC, but maintained that the VC were acting independently of Hanoi.

Bo gave the following schedule of particulars of Hanoi's version of a plan for the departure of U.S. forces:

"It contemplates three stages -- in the first stage, the U.S. would agree on the principle of their departure before the South Vietnamese settled by themselves their problems, which cannot be resolved so long as a foreign army is on their national territory. The second stage is that of negotiation. The third stage is departure."